

elected officials accountable for their actions, that women themselves could become elected officials, was not the case 157 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

The women who stood up and fought back 157 years ago did so in order that we could be able to stand here today. Because of the courage of these women, we now have 69 women serving in the House of Representatives and 14 women serving in the Senate.

However, women did not receive the right to vote without a struggle. Suffragists such as Carrie Chapman Catt, Maud Wood Park, Lucy Burns and Alice Paul faced such humiliations as arrest, jail time, and derision from all directions so that women could simply walk to the voting places and speak their minds through their votes.

We owe a great deal of gratitude and great debt of gratitude to these women. Had they not marched, picketed and protested, many of us would not be standing here today. Unfortunately, many women are not making the most of this right that many fought so powerfully to secure.

Our voices are no less important than they were many decades ago. Our ideas and beliefs are held no less powerful. Women have the power to make changes and affect policy. They can do so simply by going to the voting booths. However, while 60 percent of the women voted in the last election as opposed to 56 percent of men, a full 32 percent of women are still not registered to vote. A shocking 45 percent of young women ages 18 to 24 are not registered to vote.

It is not enough for women to rest on our laurels given that we have and do have the right to vote. We actually have to get out and make our voices heard. We must engage all women in the process. We must demonstrate to them that their voices matter to us. We must devote our energies to letting young women know that, like their counterparts 157 years ago, their participation can change the path of history.

I want to thank these women who fought so hard 157 years ago so that women across this land could vote and can continue to vote and that I could have the opportunity to stand here today and give thanks to them.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WELDON of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

A VIEW OF IRAQ FROM A SOLDIER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this evening I wish to enter into the

RECORD the compelling story of one of our soldiers from Iraq.

This is a soldier who voluntarily joined our Army in February 2002; trained as an infantryman at Fort Benning, Georgia; sent to Fort Riley; participated in the opening stages of the war, fighting all the way to Baghdad where he would remain for the next year and was promoted to the rank of sergeant during his service to the United States and was honorably discharged. He is 27 years old.

His writings include this: A view of Iraq from a soldier dated this July 2005. He says, "I am a concerned veteran of the Iraq War. I can offer some firsthand experience of the war on Iraq through the eyes of a soldier."

"My view of the situation in Iraq will differ from what the American people are being told by the Bush administration. My opinion on this matter comes from what I witnessed in Iraq personally."

He talks about members of the Bush administration creating an image of wine and roses in terms of the aftermath of the war. And Vice President DICK CHENEY said American troops would be greeted as liberators. But he goes on to say, "I participated in the invasion, stayed in Iraq for a year afterward. What I witnessed was the total opposite of what President Bush and his administration stated to the American people. The invasion was very confusing," this soldier says, "and so was the period of time I spent in Iraq afterwards. At first it did seem that all the people of Iraq were happy to be rid of Saddam Hussein, but that was only for a short period of time."

"Shortly after Saddam's regime fell, the Shiite Muslims in Iraq conducted a pilgrimage to Karbala, a pilgrimage prohibited by Saddam while he was in power. As I witnessed the Shiite pilgrimage, which was a new freedom that we provided to them, they used the pilgrimage to protest our presence in the country. I watched as they beat themselves over the head with sticks until they bled and screamed at us in anger to leave their country. Some even carried signs that read, 'No Saddam, No America.'"

"These were people that Saddam oppressed. They were his enemies. To me it seemed they hated us more than him. At that moment I knew it was going to be a long deployment. I realized that I was not being greeted as a liberator. I became overwhelmed with fear because I felt I would never be viewed that way by the Iraqi people."

"As a soldier this concerned me because if they did not view me as a liberator, then what did they view me as? I felt they viewed me as a foreign occupier of their land. That led me to believe very early on that I was going to have a fight on my hands."

"During my year in Iraq I had many altercations with the so-called insurgency. I found the insurgency I saw to be quite different from the insurgency described to the American people by

the Bush administration, the media, and the supporters of the war. There is no doubt in my mind there are foreigners from other surrounding countries in Iraq. Anyone in the Middle East who hates America now has the opportunity to kill Americans because there are roughly 140,000 U.S. troops in Iraq.

"But the bulk of the insurgency I faced was primarily the people of Iraq who were attacking us as a reaction to what they felt was an occupation of their country. I was engaged actively in urban combat in the Abu Ghraib area west of Baghdad. Many of the people who were attacking me were the poor people of Iraq. They were definitely not members of al Qaeda, left-over Baath party members, and they were not former members of Saddam's regime. They were just your average Iraqi civilian who wanted us out of their country."

"On October 31, 2003, the people of Abu Ghraib organized a large uprising against us. They launched a massive assault on our compound in the area. We were attacked with AK-47 machine guns, RPGs and mortars. Thousands of people took to the streets to attack us. As the riot unfolded before my eyes, I realized these were just the people who lived there. There were men, women and children participating. Some of the Iraqi protestors were even carrying pictures of Saddam Hussein."

"My battalion fought back with everything we had and eventually shut down the uprising. So while President Bush speaks of freedom and liberation of the Iraqi people, I find his statements are not credible after witnessing events such as these."

"During the violence that day, I felt so much fear throughout my entire body. I remember going home that night and praying to God, thanking him I was still alive."

"A few months earlier President Bush made the statement 'Bring it on' when referring to the attacks on Americans by the insurgency. To me that felt like a personal invitation to the insurgents to attack me and my friends who desperately wanted to make it home alive."

"I did my job well in Iraq. My superiors promoted me to the rank of sergeant. I was made a rifle team leader and was put in charge of other soldiers when we carried out our missions. My time as a team leader in Iraq was temporarily interrupted when I was sent to the Green Zone in Baghdad to train the Iraqi Army. And I was more than happy to do it because we were being told in order for us to get out of Iraq completely, the Iraqi military would have to be able to take over all security operations."

"The training of the Iraqi Army became a huge concern of mine. During the time I trained them, their basic training was only one week long. We showed them some basic drill and ceremonies such as marching and saluting."